

## 2004 LEGISLATIVE SESSION NEARS

By JEFF WOODHOUSE,  
LEGISLATIVE LIAISON AND PIO

Even though the legislative session is still a weeks away, potential legislation involving state employees continues to emerge. In addition to what will be offered from the recently completed Civil Service Reform Commission (see the report at [www.colorado.gov/dpa/cs/src/index.htm](http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/cs/src/index.htm)), there are plans for legislation ranging from sick leave to incentive programs that impact state employees.

### *Removal/Recalculation of Salary Lids*

Removing salary lids would allow pay opportunities to be comparable to the market and avoid salary compression for the highest paid portion of the personnel system. If it proves to be not feasible to remove the lids, we will attempt to redefine the formula for calculating them. Although the current formula to adjust the statutory lid values is a great improvement from the former practice of specified amounts, it is not keeping pace with the market, resulting in compression problems for some agencies (pay inequity) and the inability to recruit competitively for high-level positions.

### *Removing Sick Leave from Statute*

The area of leave management is becoming one of the most complex to administer in the state personnel system. Sick leave is the only remaining form of earned leave that has

portions specified by statute, specifically the amount of sick leave earned per year, the maximum accrual, and details on the conversion of excess accrual at the end of the year. The Legislative Audit Committee agreed with us that the State cannot react to market practices nor address employee needs because of the statutory restrictions. In addition, the State cannot address other portions of a complete sick leave program nor better coordinate it with

other types of leave, such as FMLA. The State needs the ability and flexibility to address leave in a coordinated and comprehensive manner.

### *Healthcare Provided Near Home or Office*

Current statute allows the interpretation of where health coverage may be administered. The State's health providers have interpreted this language to mean that coverage has to be

administered in the same county in which the covered state employee lives. We would like to change this language so that employees may be provided health coverage in the same county as they live or work. This flexibility is of great benefit to those employees who live in rural areas or those who commute long distances to their state jobs.

*Please see LEGISLATURE 2004, p.2*



*The State Senate during the 2003 Legislative Session.*



## GETTING TO KNOW... DOAH'S MERCY FISCHER

little about them, much less known the face that goes with the name. Starting this month, *The Dispatch* will be running a regular feature highlighting a employee whose name you may recognize, but know little about. This month, we will get to know DOAH's Mercy Fischer.

### *How long have you worked for DPA?*

I have worked for almost 12 years at DOAH and two years at the Department of Labor & Employment.

### *What do you do for the Department?*

I work at DOAH as a Lead Docket Clerk. My job is to assist in the proper and timely processing of regulatory agency and social services cases and other administrative law matters. I assist Administrative Law Judges in their work through document control, assisting legal assistants in complex case processing matters and providing information to the public ranging from general matters to Division policies. My responsibilities include determining appropriate actions on all incoming appeals for Human Services and Health Care Policy & Financing. I also process requests for adult and juvenile parole hearings  
*Please see FISCHER, p.2*

# LETTERS AND EMAILS

Ellecom, 15 augustus 2003,

Dear Mr. (Orlowski),

At the 7 of May of this year we visited you looking for information about my granddad, George Dammers. You were very helpful, but there was nothing about him at your department. We found a lot at the Denver Public Library (Genealogy Department) and also in the Durango Herald at the library of the Historical Museum.

After that we went to Durango, where we found his grave and at least we went to Phoenix, where we found my aunt and her three children. So we were very successful. My aunt was really very surprised and she invited us. We had a very inspiring weekend with all the relatives.

Thanks and greetings,  
Marijke and Hans  
van Delft - Dammers  
BA Ellecom  
Holland



George Orlowski and Ms. Van Delft.

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throughout the State and schedule hearings that are held in person or via telephone. Finally, I maintain a database that contains the verification of documents for required statutory and procedural compliance, monitoring and case status.

## *What is your favorite part of your job?*

Interacting with the public, our customers and my colleagues.

## *Where did you grow up?*

I was born in Manila, Philippines. I have been here for more than 15 years.

## *Where did you go to school?*

Manuel L. Quezon University, a semi-private school in Manila, Philippines. I graduated with a Bachelor of Secretarial Science.

## *What is your favorite pastime/hobby?*

Swimming, dancing, hiking, singing, watching movies or attending plays. I also try to travel as much as I can.

## *Who is your personal hero?*

Our former first lady Barbara Bush. There are millions of American people who would like to be a U.S. President someday. And Mrs. Bush has two U.S. Presidents in her family. I admire her composure as a great wife and a great mother.

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### *Remove Requirement of Two HMOs per County*

The State is no longer in the driver's seat when it comes to purchasing healthcare. Current statute requires the State to offer employees access to two HMOs in every county. Because of this requirement, health plans are not bidding on the State's benefit programs. For a recent RFP that the State conducted for a statewide HMO/PPO plan, only one carrier responded and the HMO rates were so high as to be considered a non-qualified response by the executive director.

In addition to what DPA would like to pass this session, the following bills impacting state employees will probably be introduced as well.

### *State Employee Incentives*

Eliminates the current statutory incentive award suggestion system and the incentive award suggestion system board. It also requires the State Personnel Director to submit a report to the Joint Budget Committee with recommendations for the implementation of a new state employee incentive program.

### *Joint Committee on Printing*

Establishes a committee comprised of three members of the Senate and three from the House. The committee will review the printing policies of all three branches of government, create guidelines and standardizations statewide, provide oversight for all reproduction equipment and supplies, review of printing contracts entered into by the Legislative, Judicial, and Executive branches.

### *Exempt Higher Education from State Restrictions*

Allows the governing board of each institution of higher education to elect to be exempt from the requirements of the state motor vehicle system, the division of risk management and the procurement code.

Because it is still early in the process, these bills will continue to change, sometimes drastically, throughout the legislative session. To follow the progress of the bills having an impact on state employees, please go to [www.colorado.gov/dpa/eo/legislation/index.html](http://www.colorado.gov/dpa/eo/legislation/index.html) after the session begins.

## MARILYN JORDAN AND JOSH GRUDLE DECEMBER EMPLOYEES OF THE MONTH



*Pictured from left to right: Josh Grudle, Marilyn Jordan and Executive Director Jeff Wells.*

Marilyn Jordan and Josh Grudle are responsible for getting the new online open enrollment system up, running, and into place. Although, this has been a monumental task, they have tried to anticipate all possible problems and create solutions that are both complete, easy to use and easy to understand.

With Marilyn's project management skills and Josh's technical savvy, the two of them were able to accomplish in a few months what usually takes a year. They did this in addition to their regular workload. Marilyn stays cool under pressure and takes criticism and set backs in stride. Josh paces himself and keeps in good humor. There were plenty of opportunities for panic, but Marilyn and Josh held together and provided the infrastructure upon which the rest of the department could build. With many predicting failure, they have come through and developed a thorough and useful tool for this year and for years to come.

Other nominees: DOAH's General Services Docket Team members: **Casey Singleton, Dianne Ferris, Rick Walker, Mercy Fischer, Sally Brown and Cheri O'Bannon** for their excellent teamwork; DCS's **Jim Davis** who consistently goes that extra mile to get the job done; DoIT's **Kathy Olivas** for identifying a software malfunction and resolving the problem; DFP's **Karoline Clark** for her excellent customer service in getting higher education access to the State's Financial Data Warehouse (FDW).

## PLENTY TO BE THANKFUL FOR

BY PAUL FARLEY

This is the time of year when, like many people, I pay a little more attention to those who are less fortunate, and also try to appreciate the good things in my life just a little bit more. Along these lines, the other day I was reminded of an old Irving Berlin tune from the classic 1942 musical, "Holiday Inn":

*I've got plenty to be thankful for  
No private car  
No caviar  
No carpet on my floor  
Still I've got plenty to be thankful for*

A remarkable person who exemplified this attitude throughout his life was Harold Russell. Born in 1914 in Sydney, Nova Scotia, Russell and his family moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts in 1933. On December 8, 1941, the day after the attack on Pearl Harbor, Russell joined the U.S. Army as an explosives expert in the parachute corps. In 1944, Sergeant Russell was instructing a demolition squad at Camp Mackall, North Carolina, when a defective blasting cap he was holding exploded. Both of his hands had to be amputated, and were replaced with prosthetic hooks.

His recovery was featured in an Army Signal Corps documentary, "Diary of a Sergeant," in which he was shown in the various phases of rehabilitation. Director William Wyler saw the film and was so impressed with how natural and genuine Russell was that he signed him to play the disabled returning veteran, Homer Parrish, in "The Best Years of Our Lives."



The movie's title refers to the irony that many servicemen had "the best years of their lives" in the war, rather than during the peace that followed. The film poignantly depicts the difficult adjustments - unemployment, alcoholism, and isolation - experienced by three servicemen of different ages and backgrounds returning from World War II. It was the biggest box office hit of 1946, and at the Academy Awards (hosted by the President of the Screen Actors Guild, an actor named Ronald Reagan), it won eight Academy Awards, including best picture, best



actor (Fredric March), best director, best screenplay, best editing, and best musical score. For his performance, Russell won both best supporting actor and a second, honorary Oscar "for bringing hope and courage to his fellow veterans." He is the only actor ever to win two Oscars for the same role.

"It is not what you have lost but what you have left that counts," he wrote in his autobiography, "Victory in My Hands." He told of his struggle to recover physically and psychologically from his wounds, and he became so skilled in using the prosthetic hooks that he liked to joke that he could do anything but pick up a dinner check. Russell went on to get a business degree from Boston University, and then devoted the rest of his life to working as an advocate for veterans' organizations and for the employment of people with disabilities. He helped organize the World Veterans Federation, served three terms as the head of the veteran's advocacy group AMVETS, and established the Harold Russell Institute, a non-profit organization in Cape Cod, Massachusetts specializing in finding jobs for people with disabilities.

In 1961, President Kennedy appointed Russell to be the Vice Chairman of the President's Committee on Hiring the Handicapped (now the Office on Disability Employment Policy in the Department of Labor), which promotes the employment of people with disabilities. Three years later, President Johnson appointed him as the panel's chairman, and although it is



customary for appointees to offer their resignations whenever there is a change of their administrations, presidents of both major parties reappointed Russell to the post. Following the 1980 election, when Ronald Reagan saw Russell's name on the list, he said, "You're not firing him - I gave him his Oscar." As chairman, Russell played a key part in the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, which prohibits federally-funded programs from discriminating against disabled individuals.

He rarely acted after "The Best Years of Our Lives." His first role was 1980's "Inside Moves," and he had guest spots on "Trapper John, M.D." and the Vietnam War television series "China Beach." Russell stepped down from the presidential committee in 1989, and in 1992, he

auctioned one of his Oscars for \$60,000 to pay medical expenses for his wife. No previous Oscar recipient had ever done such a thing, and the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences opposed the sale. Russell responded, "I don't know why anybody would be critical. My wife's health is much more important than sentimental reasons. The movie will be here, even if Oscar isn't." He made his last film appearance in 1997's "Dogtown," and died in January 2002 after a long illness at the age of 88.

*How could anybody ask for more?  
My needs are small  
I buy them all  
At the five and ten cent store  
Oh, I've got plenty to be thankful for*

#### ***This and That:***

- The "Holiday Inn" hotel chain was founded by a high school dropout-turned-self-made millionaire, Kemmons Wilson. In 1951, on a summer vacation with his wife and five children, Wilson was insulted by the poor amenities, lack of cleanliness, and hidden charges families experienced at most hotels. He took notes during the trip, and by the time he got back home, he knew what he wanted. Wilson hired a drafter, Eddie Bluestein, to create blueprints from his hand-drawn diagrams. Bluestein was watching an old Bing Crosby-Fred Astaire musical while he worked, and jotted the name of the film across the bottom of the plans. Kemmons saw the name it, liked it, and began building a nationwide chain of moderately-priced hotels. "You can cater to rich people, and I'll take the rest," he said. "The good Lord made so many more of them."
- In 1941, actor Jimmy Stewart volunteered for the Army Air Corps, and flew 25 combat missions in Europe as a bomber squadron commander. He returned as a colonel with decorations, including a Distinguished Flying Cross with oak leaf cluster. Stewart remained in the reserves after the war, and was promoted to brigadier general in 1959.

When Ronald Reagan was running for President in 1980, Stewart joined him at several campaign functions. Reagan would always point out Stewart's military record and note that he was "a major general in the Air Corps Reserve." Once, the master of ceremonies referred to "Brigadier General Jimmy Stewart." Then Reagan got up to speak, and apologizing for correcting their host, said "It's Major General Jimmy Stewart." Later that night, Stewart said, "Ron, that fellow tonight was right." Reagan asked why Stewart had never said anything during all of their previous public appearances together. Stewart replied, "I never corrected you before because it sounded so good."